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Author(s): W. R. Chalmers
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Parmenides and the Beliefs of Mortals[1]

W. R. CHALMERS

THE THREE main parts of Parmenides' poem are apt to receive rather unequal treatment at the hands of many historians of Ancient Philosophy. From early times there has been a tendency to concentrate attention upon the Way of Truth and rather to neglect the Prologue and the Beliefs of Mortals. The Prologue is frequently explained as an interesting example of archaic imagination intruding into a philosophical work, while the last part has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Some scholars have suggested that in it Parmenides is merely representing the views of other thinkers, while others believe that it does in some way describe Parmenides' own thought. There is as yet no general agreement about what the relationship is between the Beliefs of Mortals and the Way of Truth. Both are however parts of the same poem, and it is reasonable to infer that a solution of this problem of their inter-relationship will throw light on the correct interpretation of the whole work. It is the purpose of this paper to consider in particular the last part of the poem and to try to establish what its status is in the context of the whole work.

It is useful, at the beginning of any discussion of Parmenides, to remember that he wrote in verse by his own choice. He may indeed have followed Xenophanes in writing in hexameters, but his poem with its Hesiodic flavour, clearly owes very little else to Xenophanes. It is most probable that he chose the medium of verse for two reasons; firstly, because he looked on philosophy as almost a religious activity,[2] and the attainment of truth as a kind of revelation which had to be described in appropriate language, and secondly, as Cornford once suggested,[3] because he desired that his work should be more easily committed to memory. In this way its meaning could become more clear when the student was able to reflect upon it and to compare various parts of it. I believe that this suggestion is a very useful one, and it is almost established by the number of occasions on which Parmenides seems to repeat phraseology and images in a significant fashion.

[1] This paper is substantially the same as one delivered before the Classical Association of England and Wales in Nottingham in April 1958. I am very grateful to Professor J. B. Skemp for some valuable suggestions.

[2] Cf. C. M. Bowra, The Proem of Parmenides, *Classical Philology*, XXXII, 2 (1937), pp. 97-112, p. 112.

[3] F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, (London, 1912), p. 225.

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It may be useful to begin by considering briefly the outline of the work, and noting the ways in which reference is made to its final part. In the Prologue, Parmenides gives a graphic allegorical description of his intellectual journey. Like Phaethon, he is taken in a chariot, guided by Daughters of the Sun; and this conveys him, presumably from darkness, to the gates of Night and Day. Here his immortal companions prevail upon Δίκη πολύποινος – Avenging Justice – to open the gates and allow them to enter the realms of light, where they are given a kindly welcome by a goddess who then addresses Parmenides. We may note that Bowra has shown [1] that the imagery adopted has close parallels in the work of Pindar and other contemporary poets, and he suggests most reasonably that Parmenides intends by this Prologue to show that he speaks with the special authority of one who has consorted with a goddess.

The words used by the goddess are important, particularly in the lines which close this fragment:

Χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
ἠμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ
ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής.
ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεαι, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα
χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα.
(28 B, 1, 28-32) [2]

The translation of the first two and a half lines is fairly straight-forward. "You must learn all things, both the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth, and the beliefs of mortals in which there is no true belief" – or perhaps for 'belief' we should say 'reliability,' 'evidence' or 'genuine conviction.'[3] The important point to note is that it is the goddess who considers it necessary for Parmenides to learn not only about Truth, but also about the Beliefs of Mortals.

The last two lines have proved very troublesome. Before the work of Diels,[4] δοκίμως appeared in all the texts as the adverb formed from δόκιμος, which would give the passage some such translation as "But in any case you will learn this too, how the things that seem had to be in an acceptable fashion, all passing through All." Diels did not like this and by adding an apostrophe read δοκιμῶσ', interpreting it as the Aorist Infinitive of δοκίμωμι. This has been accepted by many scholars including

[1] *op. cit. passim.*
[2] The references in brackets are to Diels-Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*[6], (Berlin 1951).
[3] Cf. G. Jameson, 'Well-rounded truth' and circular thought in Parmenides, *Phronesis*, III, 1 (1958) pp. 15-30.
[4] H. Diels, *Parmenides Lehrgedicht*, (Berlin 1897), pp. 57-61.

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Burnet, who translated the two lines: "Yet none the less shalt thou learn these things also, – how passing right through all things one should judge the things that seem to be." We must note the following points. (a) The elision of the -αι of an Aorist Infinitive, as Diels himself admitted, is only found in Greek in one or two passages in Comedy. (b) δοκίμωμι appears elsewhere only in two fragments of Sappho, and δοκιμόω, another possibility, occurs only in Theocritus (once) and in an imitation of a letter of Pherekydes in Diogenes Laertius. (c) To make sense one has to disregard the past tense of χρῆν and translate it virtually as a present tense – 'You must' or 'one must.' (d) Even Burnet [1] could not decide whether εἶναι was to be taken with δοκιμῶσαι or τὰ δοκοῦντα from which it is rather harshly separated, and his translation does not make it clear whether he takes περῶντα with τὰ δοκοῦντα or with σε understood. Surely on grounds of Greek alone, an alteration which introduces so many improbabilities and ambiguities is to be rejected. It has rightly been attacked by many scholars including Wilamowitz, Reinhardt and Verdenius, and Kranz in the latest edition of Diels' *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* restored the old reading.[2] Verdenius translates δοκίμως as 'in an acceptable fashion,' and this is, I think, quite likely. It is hard to establish the exact sense of διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα, but it implies that the things that seem had to pass through or permeate either All or Everything; I rather favour the former.

This passage is of crucial importance. The adverbial reading implies that the goddess herself is promising to give an account of the origin of Beliefs. On the other hand Diels' apostrophe lays the poem open to theorising of many kinds. In any case, we may note that the goddess refers quite objectively to the 'things that seem.'

These lines end the fragment that contains the Prologue, and it seems that thereafter the goddess began to discuss the premisses which are fundamental to the Way of Truth. First she makes a statement about the ways of research that can be thought of; "the one that it is, and it is impossible for it not to be, is the way of Persuasion for it attends upon Truth, and the other that it is not, and it is bound not to be, that is a way that cannot be learned, for you could not recognise what is-not (it is not possible) nor express it" (28B2, 3-8). Later (28B6) she gives another warning against the pursuit of the way of Not-being, and also against another Way, along which wander mortals εἰδότες οὐδέν,

[1] J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*[4], (London, 1930), p. 172, n. 3.

[2] Wilamowitz, *Hermes*, XXXIV (1899), p. 204. Reinhardt, *Parmenides*, (Bonn 1916), pp. 5-10. Verdenius, *Parmenides, Some Comments on his Poem*, (Groningen 1942), pp. 49-50. Kranz, *op. cit.* p. 230.

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'knowing nothing', but possibly, as Bowra suggests,[1] the phrase bears the religious connotation of 'uninitiated.' These mortals are "two-headed, for perplexity guides the wandering thought in their breasts; they are carried along, deaf and blind at once, altogether dazed – hordes devoid of judgement, by whom it has been thought that To-be and Not-to-be are the same thing and not the same, and that of all things there is a backward-turning path."

These are difficult lines. I think that we may say to begin with that the Way of Not-being is introduced to provide a logical balance to the Way of Being, in a fashion that is rather typical of Parmenides' style. Such is, I think, the opinion of most scholars, although Reich has argued [2] that Parmenides is here attacking Anaximander on the grounds that to Parmenides τὸ ἄπειρον is the equivalent of Not-being. This is ingenious, but I think that it goes too far. The second false way was for long generally taken to refer to the school of Heraclitus, and certainly the sentence about Being and Not-being does remind us of Heraclitus' notorious style, while the παλίντροπος κέλευθος might reasonably be taken as a reference to the Upward and Downward Paths. Reinhardt argued against this view [3] and maintained that Parmenides could hardly have been familiar with the work of Heraclitus. Reich [4] believes that it is a reference to the Pythagoreans, and that it is particularly directed against the theory of παλιγγενεσία. One could produce an even stronger case than that propounded by Reich if one could be sure that the Pythagoreans at this time held the view that the One grew by inhaling the Void – or Not-being. The passage could of course refer to philosophers like the Milesians who, as Cornford remarks,[5] confused the initial state of things with the permanent ground of Being. Lastly it could apply to ordinary human beings who believe in Change as a real thing. In the face of so many possibilities, it is wisest to be cautious. Parmenides may here be attacking a particular school, but if so, the way in which the passage is introduced does not compel one to hold that the members of that school are necessarily identical with the βροτοί of the last part of the poem.

[1] *op. cit.* pp. 109-110.
[2] K. Reich, Anaximander und Parmenides, *Marburger-Winckelmann Programm* 1950/51, pp. 13-16, p. 15.
[3] *op. cit.*, especially pp. 64 and 155.
[4] K. Reich, Parmenides und die Pythagoreer, *Hermes* LXXXII (1954), pp. 287-94.
[5] F. M. Cornford, Parmenides' Two Ways, *Classical Quarterly* XXVII (1933), pp. 97-111, p. 103.

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In the next fragment which we possess (28B7), the goddess cautions Parmenides against the way of reliance upon sense-perception, and urges him to judge by reason the proof which she sets forth. Then in the long fragment 8, she describes the essential nature of What-is. This part might be summarised as follows. (a) What-is neither came into being, nor will it pass away. (b) It is continuous and indivisible. (c) It is a motionless whole. Then comes a rather difficult passage which tells us at least that there is a necessary connexion between Thought and Being and which contains the statement; "therefore all things which mortals have established, believing them to be true, will be but a name – Becoming and Perishing, Being and Not-being and change of position and alteration of bright colour" (28B8, 38-41). Lastly, What-is is limited, like the mass of a well-rounded σφαῖρα, and it is fully and uniformly real. In this part, the important point for our discussion is that rational thought can only be directed towards What-is, and in comparison with it, the objects of sense-perception are merely a name, not capable of being thought.

It is fortunate that at the end of this fragment we have preserved for us the passage which marks the transition from the Way of Truth to the Way of Opinion. "Herein I end my trustworthy speech and thought about Truth. Learn now the Beliefs of Mortals, listening to the deceptive ordering of my words" (28B8, 50-52). On this passage Simplicius has a very useful comment (28A34). He says that the goddess's account is deceptive, not because it is false purely and simply, but because it has here passed from intelligible truth to the sensible which appears to be and is the object of opinion.

There follow the opening lines of the Beliefs part which state that mortals have decided to name two forms, the ethereal flame of Fire and its opposite Dark Night, and the fragment ends;

τόν σοι ἐγὼ διάκοσμον ἐοικότα πάντα φατίζω,
ὡς οὐ μή ποτέ τίς σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσσῃ. (28B8, 60-61). Here the word ἐοικότα is difficult. It is often translated as 'apparent' or 'probable', but Verdenius points out [1] that the goddess could hardly say, "I impart to you something unreal or probable, that you may surpass all"; and so, citing parallels from Homer,[2] he suggests the translation 'as is proper.' We might therefore render the passage: "I tell you the whole system as is proper, that so no thought of mortal man shall ever outstrip you."

The last part of the poem has been transmitted to us in only a few rather sketchy fragments, but enough survives to show that it propound-

[1] *op. cit.* p. 51.

[2] *e.g. Od.* III, 124-5.

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ed a system in which the phenomena of heaven and earth were deduced from the mixture of two primary elements, Fire and Night. It is clear that this part of the poem contained views on cosmology and a kind of Theogony, and we must note that the description is given by the goddess in the indicative mood, as a matter of fact, and that she uses such phrases as "You will know." Although it must be admitted that the statements made about the Way of Truth seem at first sight to preclude the possibility of attaching much importance to the Beliefs of Mortals, the fact that the third part of the poem is put by Parmenides into the mouth of the goddess, and that she says that it is necessary for him to learn about it, indicate that it cannot be ignored.

We are given some assistance in our enquiry by the fact that in addition to the internal evidence supplied by the poem, we can also make use of the testimony of writers in antiquity who had the advantage of being able to study the whole work. The most important of these is Aristotle, who says in the *Metaphysics* [1] that Parmenides, "being obliged to follow phenomena, and believing that while only the one exists according to reason, but more than one according to our sensations, posited two first principles, the Hot and the Cold, that is, Fire and Earth." Aristotle's confusion about the two first principles throws some doubts on his reliability on this point, but it is at least clear that he assumed that the Beliefs represented Parmenides' own ideas and that in a sense they complemented the Way of Truth. Similar views are expressed by Theophrastus and Plutarch,[2] and Plotinus observes in the Fifth Ennead [3] that "with all his affirmations of Unity, Parmenides' own writings lay him open to the reproach that his unity turns out to be a multiplicity". We have already had occasion to refer to the remarks of Simplicius on this topic.

In modern times the problem has been widely discussed, and a bewildering variety of solutions propounded. Many scholars have adopted the apostrophe of Diels and virtually disregarded the ancient commentators. Diels himself suggested [4] that the Beliefs of Mortals constitute a summary of the ideas of other people, and that they are included by Parmenides in order to arm his disciples against possible attacks. Burnet believed more specifically [5] that it was an exposé of the theories of the

[1] A 5, 986b27-34. (DK 28A24).
[2] DK. 28A7 and 28A34.
[3] *Enn.* V, 1, 8. I have made use of MacKenna's translation.
[4] *op. cit.* p. 63.
[5] *op. cit*, pp. 182-185.

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Pythagorean school, the school from which Parmenides had himself learned much, and which was likely to provide the most formidable critics of his own system. It is very difficult to establish the chronology of Pythagorean ideas, but it seems fairly clear that although they did speak in terms of a dualism of the Limit and the Unlimited, and did construct tables of pairs of opposites, the particular pair Fire and Night does not feature in any Pythagorean work. Moreover some of the astronomical details given in the last part of the poem were looked on in antiquity as being Parmenides' own ideas, – and this is a point which helps to refute Diels' theory as well as Burnet's. More cogent is the fact that, as we shall see, the phraseology and imagery of the Way of Truth are sometimes echoed in the Beliefs of Mortals. This would be pointlessly confusing if this last part were merely a summary of the views of other people. There seem moreover to be links between the Prologue and the Beliefs. Lastly one might ask why Parmenides should have found it desirable to put the views of other people into the mouth of the same goddess who initiated him into the Way of Truth, and why she should consider it necessary for him to learn from her what he might reasonably have been expected to know already.

I think that we may disregard any theories which claim that the views put forward in this part of the poem are not those of Parmenides himself. There is no real evidence either to support the notion that Parmenides is putting forward a hypothetical picture of how the Universe could be accounted for if there were two first principles instead of one. Nor is there any shred of evidence for the theory of Nietzsche [1] that we have here views which Parmenides had held in his youth and subsequently discarded.

There are however several scholars who accept the view that the ideas of the Beliefs of Mortals are Parmenides' own, but who nevertheless deny that they have any positive connexion with the Way of Truth. Reinhardt [2] suggested that the goddess is here "bringing truth about opinion, showing the origin of all errors of the imagination." This seems to give this part of the poem too restricted an aim, and as Schwabl has pointed out,[3] it is difficult on this hypothesis to see why the goddess should say as she does in Fragment 10, "You will know the nature of Aether etc.". This criticism applies also to Riezler,[4] who in some ways

[1] Quoted by Verdenius, *op. cit.* p. 45.

[2] *op. cit.* p. 26.

[3] H. Schwabl, Sein und Doxa bei Parmenides, *Wiener Studien* LXVI (1953), pp. 50-75, p. 58.

[4] K. Riezler, *Parmenides*, (Frankfurt 1934), pp. 14ff., 43ff., and 61. *Cf.* the review by Gadamer, *Gnomon* XII (1936), pp. 77-86.

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follows Reinhardt, particularly when he talks of the πρῶτον ψεῦδος in δόξα. In general his interpretation of What-is as "das Sein des Seienden", seems rather too Platonic.

Cornford states;[1] "The two parts are consecutive chapters in a single scheme. Neither part, by itself, contains a complete system of the whole world. The first chapter starts from the universally accepted premiss of cosmology – a One Being or Existent Unity – and proceeds as far as its rational deduction will go, but no further. The second introduces additional factors unwarranted by reason – the two 'Forms' Fire and Night and all that follows in their train. Once these Forms are recognised as real and admitted to the scheme, the cosmology can be and is continued in the traditional manner; though all that follows is vitiated by this illegitimate step." Raven [2] on this point mainly follows Cornford, but goes rather further when he says: "We should not waste time in the hopeless attempt to reconcile the two parts".

Coxon believes [3] that Cornford is wrong in thinking that the transition from the World of Truth to that of Opinion is effected by leaping across an unbridged and unbridgeable gap. Rather we should say that Parmenides begins all over again. Logic ends with the world of Truth and "outside it nothing rational, even by way of transition, is possible. Where logic ends, poetry or myth begins, and the break is absolute." Later in his article,[4] he says; "The only connexion which Parmenides could admit between Being and Becoming was thus the supposition that out of the latter, under certain conditions, there can arise an apprehension of the former."

A more extreme view is put forward by Guthrie, who in a work intended for non-specialists [5] maintains that "Parmenides believed that all that men imagine about the Universe, all that they think they see and hear and feel is pure illusion." If we examine this view, we must note that it implies that not only what men think they sense is pure illusion, but that they themselves are pure illusion. The existence of Man is not accounted for in the Way of Truth. The only discussion of Man and his place in the Universe occurs in the Beliefs part, and so presumably, if the Way of Truth describes the sum total of reality, and all else is

[1] *op. cit.* p. 98.
[2] Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, (Cambridge 1957), p. 281.
[3] A. H. Coxon, The Philosophy of Parmenides, *Classical Quarterly* XXVIII (1934), pp. 134-144, especially p. 139.
[4] p. 143.
[5] W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers – from Thales to Aristotle*, (London 1950), p. 49.

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illusion, Man too is an illusion. It is very difficult to believe that Parmenides could seriously have thought this.

The poem makes it quite clear that Man can attain to knowledge of the real world, even if such knowledge comes to him through revelation and not solely as a result of his own intellectual efforts. Now if we take the statement τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι (28B3) in the most natural way, it means "Thinking is the same as Being."[1] (Burnet's rather contorted "For the same thing can be thought as can be,"[2] has been shown by Verdenius [3] to be unnecessarily complicated.) If that is the meaning, one of the implications of this statement would, I think, be that the man who has knowledge of reality, somehow or other *is*. Even if we do not go so far as to accept that, we are surely entitled to expect some explanation of human existence, and since our informant is a goddess, we should look for something better than mere myth or fable. The Way of Truth is not really complete, as it describes an object of knowing without telling us anything about the subjects of knowing, if I may so put it.

One might add that the third line of the whole poem (28B1,3) refers to the εἰδότα φῶτα – the 'knowing' or 'initiated' man being carried through all the towns. It would seem possible to deduce from this that Parmenides was in some sense εἰδώς *before* he was instructed by the goddess, and this implies that there must be some objective standards of comparison *in* the World of Belief, by which the man who is εἰδώς is distinguished from the rest of mankind. This in turn points to the World of Belief having some validity.

If there is a gap in the thought-structure of the poem, or if the physical world is completely separated from the metaphysical, it is rather a defect, and we should not assume the existence of such a defect until we have carefully examined alternative explanations which seek to integrate the whole work.

Such an attempt was made by Stenzel who stated;[4] "The rigid, solid Being, underlying all, has only meaning through being contrasted with a thing which develops in and through it" and he went on to talk of What-is almost as an ἀρχή in the Milesian sense. In other words the philosophy of Parmenides would, on this theory, be not dissimilar from that of Anaximander, with What-is substituted for τὸ ἄπειρον. This goes

[1] On this point cf. E. D. Phillips, Parmenides on Thought and Being, *The Philosophical Review* LXIV (1955) pp. 546-560.
[2] *op. cit.* p. 173 (following Zeller).
[3] *op. cit.* pp. 33-37.
[4] J. Stenzel, *Metaphysik des Altertums*, (Münich-Berlin 1931), p. 54.

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much too far, as it seems completely to mis-represent the Way of Truth. It was rightly attacked by Hermann Fraenkel,[1] and can, I think, be disregarded.

Verdenius [2] has suggested that while the Way of Truth deals with absolute reality, the Beliefs are concerned with appearances which are reality of an inferior order. "The philosopher," he says, "knows that change should be judged not on its own merits, but by a higher standard. If he always keeps the real being in mind and uses it as a perpetual standard of reference, he will be able to delimit the true nature of change. He will deal with empirical reality and try to explain it, but this in the belief that his interpretation of this εἰκών, this shadow of Truth, is not ultimate knowledge, but only its shadow, an εἰκὼς λόγος, and that man should be content with this."

This notion of the relative truth of the world of mortals is also present in the interpretation put forward by Schwabl.[3] He believes that the speech of the goddess contains (a) the true way, and (b) a cosmology based on the true way. In the Way of Truth and the first part of the cosmology, we have elements of criticism of other philosophers. These are in particular the Ionians who explain Coming-to-be and Passing-away as an exchange of Being and Not-being, which is 'quite irrational and unintelligent,' and secondly it is directed against the Pythagoreans who explain Coming-to-be and Passing-away as the result of a mixture of irreconcilable opposites. Parmenides, according to Schwabl, accepts this to some extent but proves that the opposites Fire and Night are not Being and Not-being in an absolute sense, but both in some degree *are*. This last point Schwabl bases on the fact that the phrase πᾶν ἔμπλεόν ἐστιν ἐόντος in the Way of Truth (28B8, 24), is balanced in the Beliefs of Mortals by the statement

πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου
ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων, ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρῳ μέτα μηδέν. (28B9, 3-4). "All is full equally of Light and dark Night, both equal, since neither has a share in Not-being."

I find these theories of Verdenius and Schwabl attractive, although for reasons which are in some respects rather different from those which they put forward.

It is important to remember that in the Way of Truth, What-is is looked on as being corporeal, in the sense that it extends in space. It is,

[1] H. Fraenkel, Parmenidesstudien, *Gött. Nachr.* 1930. pp. 153-192, p. 185.
[2] *op. cit.* pp. 59-60.
[3] *op. cit.*

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I think, also clear that it is spherical. We are told that it is 'like the mass of a well-rounded σφαῖρα' (28B8, 43). This simile has however caused trouble. Several scholars, including Coxon, Kranz and Gigon,[1] have translated it as 'like the mass of a well-rounded sphere' and feel that it is specially significant that it is not simply described as spherical. Coxon makes the point that Fragment 5 – "It is all one where I begin, for I shall come back thither again" – shows that the sphere is not to be taken as a literal description of the character of Reality, but as a simile illustrating the possibility of rational thinking. I think that it is highly probable that the simile fulfils this function also, but I believe that we are justified in taking it as meaning 'spherical.' σφαῖρα after all, would most probably suggest a ball to Parmenides' contemporaries.[2] We must remember that stereometry scarcely existed in his time, and if we also recall *Phaedo* 110B, where Plato describes the manufacture of balls from twelve pieces of leather, we may feel that the epithet 'well-rounded' is far from otiose. What is, then, is spherical, extending in space, and we may infer from the two passages quoted together above,[3] that the World of Belief occupies the same space.

Now if two things occupy the same space simultaneously, it suggests that they are, at least in one respect, the same thing, although perhaps viewed from different aspects. For example it might be said that a bottle contains a pint of water, while a scientist might say that the same bottle contains x atoms of Oxygen and $2x$ atoms of Hydrogen. His description would have the advantage that it would continue to be true even if the contents of the bottle were converted into ice or steam. But fundamentally both statements would be describing the same thing, although the description, 'a pint of water,' might hold good for a lesser period of time than that of the scientist.

I would suggest that Parmenides' reasoning was not dissimilar, and that in his poem he shows us what is fundamentally the same Universe as viewed by a goddess in the Way of Truth and by mortals in the Way of Opinion. We must establish what the essential difference is between their two points of view. The distinction between the two parts could be variously described. The Way of Truth, it could be said, deals with the world of reality, rationality and intelligibility, while the World of Belief on the other hand is not-real, irrational (or as Coxon suggests [4]

[1] Coxon, *op. cit.* p. 140; Kranz, DK. p. 238, and Gigon, *Der Ursprung der Griechischen Philosophie*, (Basel 1945), p. 268.

[2] This point is also made by Jameson, *op. cit.* p. 15, n. 3.

[3] p. 16.

[4] *op. cit.* p. 143.

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a-rational), and knowable only by means of the senses. All these distinctions are, I think, implied by the poem; although the use of the word νοεῖν in these two parts of the work suggests that the distinction between intellect and sensation may not have occupied the foremost place in Parmenides' thought.

I wish to put forward the suggestion that the basic distinction between the two Worlds is the distinction between Eternity and Time. At the very beginning of the Way of Truth we are told that What-is is ἀγένητον καὶ ἀνώλεθρον 'uncreated and indestructible' (28B8,3), and a line further on we are told that οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν, ἕν, συνεχές, 'It *was* not, nor *will* it be, for it *is* now, all at once, one, continuous' (8, 5-6). The phrase οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν is one of the first clear statements of the concept of Eternity in Greek philosophy, and it is one on which Plato in the *Timaeus* cannot improve.[1] It is therefore the eternity of What-is to which Parmenides first draws our attention. On the other hand, when the goddess speaks of the things which mortals wrongly assume to be true, the first things she mentions are γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ὄλλυσθαι 'becoming and perishing' (28B8, 40), which contrast neatly with the former ἀγένητον καὶ ἀνώλεθρον and are clearly the attributes of things in Time.

The goddess is herself eternal. This is, I think, proved by the fact that the eternal What-is is held in place by the divine powers Δίκη, Μοῖρα and Ἀνάγκη, which shows that what one might call the 'basic' divine powers of the poem are themselves eternal, and Parmenides' anonymous divine informant clearly belongs to this category. The Olympian gods were immortal, but they had been born. It may have been Xenophanes who first described the gods as eternal rather than immortal, but unfortunately we cannot be entirely certain about the relative dating of Parmenides' poem and the later work of Xenophanes.[2] In contrast to the eternal goddess, βροτοί are simply mortals who come-to-be and pass-away in Time.

Such a contrast between human beings and divine powers is almost

[1] Much is sometimes made of the fact that Plato's formula (*Tim.* 37e) omits the νῦν, and this is interpreted e.g. by Cherniss (*Journal of Hellenic Studies* LXXVII, (1957), Part I, p. 22, n. 46) as an implied criticism of Parmenides' formula. I do not think that this is the case. The ἔστι of Parmenides is in the eternal present, and the νῦν too is surely timeless. Parmenides' phrase, incidentally, sounds very like a criticism of Heraclitus' statement (22B30) ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ ἀείζωον...

[2] For a recent discussion of this problem see H. Thesleff, On dating Xenophanes, *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* XXIII, 3 (Helsingfors 1957) pp. 1-22. Cf. Gigon, *op. cit.* p. 194.

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foreshadowed by the Homeric distinction between 'what the gods call' and 'what men call,' and Bowra has shown [1] that it is not without parallel in the literature of Parmenides' own time. It would therefore probably be quite comprehensible to Parmenides' contemporaries. Moreover such a contrast would be quite a natural one for Parmenides to make. He may well have felt that many of his philosophical predecessors had failed to distinguish between what is constant in change and what is the original stuff out of which things have developed.

In the central part of the poem, then, Parmenides' eternal goddess is telling us *in propria persona* about what is eternally. It is clear that she believes that only statements about What-is can be described as true. The Way of Truth is a description of eternal Being. Any statement which does not relate to what-is must therefore fall short of truth, although this does not exclude the possibility of it being, shall we say, 'valid' in Time. Truth alone has the quality of 'Persuasion,' which attends upon Truth (28B2, 4), but in the statements of mortal men about temporal things, there is no πίστις ἀληθής (28B1,30).

It is, I think also correct to say that only What-is can rightly be named. We may infer this from the fact that the Way of Not-being is described (28B8, 17-18) as being ἀνόητος ἀνώνυμος (οὐ γὰρ ἀληθής ἔστιν ὁδός) 'unthinkable and nameless for it is no true way.' As in the context of the Way of Truth, only What-is is thinkable, it is probable that only What-is can properly be named as well. This would explain why, a little later in the Way of Truth, we are told that 'all those will be a mere name which mortals laid down believing them to be true, coming into being and perishing, being and not being, change of place and variation of bright colour.' (28B8,38-41) A name which does not relate to What-is remains only a name from the point of view of Truth.

Naming also features in the first few lines of the Beliefs part of the poem. "For mortals made up their minds to name two forms τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεών ἐστιν — ἐν ᾧ πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν" (28B8, 53-4). These last few words have been variously translated. Burnet [2] and others who believe that the last part of the poem is a statement of the beliefs of other people, and those who believe that Fire and Night can be equated with Being and Not-being, have translated them as meaning 'one of which they should not name' – for which one would of course have expected ἑτέρην. Cornford [3] is, I think, right in taking them as meaning 'of which they should not name one' – in the sense of 'even one,' because of course neither form fully *is*. Other explanations have been put forward, for

[1] *op. cit.* p. 110. [2] *op. cit.* p. 176. [3] *op. cit.* pp. 108-109.

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example by Verdenius,[1] but Cornford's is the simplest and at the same time the most satisfactory. It is in naming the two forms, and in thus treating them as though they possessed absolute reality that mortals have gone astray.

One might feel that this last passage provides evidence against the view that Fire and Night have even relative reality. They appear to be introduced as the result of an arbitrary act of mortals, and so to have only a subjective kind of existence in the minds of men. This is, I admit, rather a difficulty, but I think that an explanation can be given. The eternal goddess is quite at home talking about real eternal Being, but she must exercise particular caution when talking of temporal things in order to make sure that her hearers will not fall into the error of assigning to these things in Time a value which is appropriate only to What-is. She therefore introduces her account in this way, but later changes to a more straightforward method. Luckily the passage in which the transition is made has been preserved for us: "Since all things have been named Light and Night, and things corresponding to their powers have been assigned to each, All is full of Light and dark Night, both equal, since neither has any share of nothingness." (28B9, 1-4).

This last passage is the one used by Schwabl to establish a link between the two didactic parts of the poem. The phrase πᾶν πλέον ἐστίν is usually translated as "Everything is full of Light and Night," but this, I am convinced, is impossible. We are told in Fragment 12 of the existence of bands of 'unmixed fire' and so, as fire is used as a synonym for light, it is clear that these bands at least are not full both of light and night. Possibly the safest translation is "It is all full of light and night," with the πᾶν in a predicative position, but I rather wonder, from the frequency with which this phrase πᾶν ἐστίν occurs, whether πᾶν may not be used to mean All, as an equivalent of What-is. The definite article might have been omitted by Parmenides because mention of '*the* all' almost implies the possibility of the existence of 'the half' and so on, and one cannot have a piece of what is indivisible. This is only a suggestion for which I can find no real evidence, but if it were correct it would help us with the translation of διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα in Fragment 1,32.[2] It would suggest that the things that seem, like travellers, pass through What-is.

In that passage the word χρῆν occurs and the whole passage seems to mean that the goddess was telling Parmenides "how it was necessary

[1] *op. cit.* p. 62.

[2] This is discussed by Diels, *Lehrgedicht*, pp. 60-61. It is interesting to note that Heracli-

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for the things that seem to be in an acceptable fashion." This passage helps us to answer another question that must occur to us. "What is the 'efficient cause' of the World of Belief?" χρῆν makes us think automatically of Ananke, and it is interesting to find that Ananke appears both in the Way of Truth and the Beliefs of Mortals. In the former it is said that "Strong Necessity holds What-is in the bonds of the limit that keeps it back on every side", (28B8, 30-31), while in the latter we are told, "You will know also the surrounding heaven, whence it sprang and how Necessity brought and constrained it to hold the limits of the stars" (28B10, 5-7). Surely this echo is intentional.

The same metaphor of holding in bonds or shackles is also applied to Moira and Dike in the Way of Truth (28B8, 4-5 and 37-38), and this may well be an indication that these are all manifestations of a single divine power and that Parmenides' attitude is basically monotheistic. In any case we may note that divine power links the Beliefs not only with the Way of Truth, but also with the Prologue. The daemon who "in the middle steers all things" (28B12, 3) seems very close to Much-Avenging Dike who in the Prologue holds the keys of gates of Day and Night (28B1,14). It is presumably this same daemon who in the tantalisingly brief reference in Plato's *Symposium* (28B13) "first of all the gods contrived Love." This presumably indicates that there was a second category of deities who were not eternal. It is certainly she who is responsible for birth and the union of male and female (28B12, 3-4).

Of course there are at least two ways of taking this evidence. Raven says,[1] "We learn from the fact that Justice or Necessity is now (in the Beliefs) described as the cause of movement and becoming, how totally irreconcilable are the two parts of Parmenides' poem." This may be so, but I prefer, and I think that here I am following the ancient commentators, to take these references at their face value, and I would suggest that the divine power functions in a way that is in some respects reminiscent of Plato's Demiourgos, and that it forms the unifying link in the whole poem. There are draw-backs to this interpretation, because the presence of divine power is assumed rather than proved, and we are not given any real explanation of how or why it begins to operate in Time. There is thus some justification for the theory that there is a gap between the two parts, but I should prefer to say that the birth of the World of

tus (22B41) uses the phrase ὁτέῃ ἐκυβέρνησε πάντα διὰ πάντων which would be more natural. Zafiropoulo (*L'École Éléate*, Paris 1950, p. 133) retains the περ ὄντα of some of Simplicius' manuscripts. This is, I think, impossible as Parmenides invariably uses the epsilon form of the present participle of εἶναι..

[1] *op. cit.* pp. 284-5.

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Belief has not been registered quite in due form, but that is not the same as saying that it is illegitimate.

One might ask how it is possible for coming-to-be and passing-away, movement and variation of bright colour, and all the other characteristic features of the sensible world, to have even a relative kind of existence within the same limits as the World of Being from which all these have been so rigorously excluded. This problem can, I think, be solved fairly easily. From the point of view of eternity, all things in the sensible world have a Highest Common Factor of Being, which is the same for all, irrespective of whether they are as light and fine in texture as Fire at the one end of the scale, or as heavy and dense as Night at the other end. If one starts with the assumption that What-is is all that matters, all the objects in this World of Belief lose their identity. It is not *true* in the Parmenidean sense to say that a man *is*, or that a table *is*, because man and table are not eternal beings. Moreover there is no Not-being or Void, and so Being, if we may call it that, extends throughout the whole sphere. ἐὸν γὰρ ἐόντι πελάζει (28B8, 25), "What-is is close to what-is" – a rather curious statement unless one adopts this explanation. Moreover if an object moves in space, we must remember that it is only the temporal characteristics which move, and the all-pervading What-is remains unaffected. It would be true to say that "The One remains, the Many change and pass. . ."

It will be clear from what has been said so far that I cannot accept the view that Fire is to be equated with Being and Night with Not-being, although it has the support of Aristotle. He states with reference to Fire and Night: "Of these he classes the Hot with what-is and its opposite with what is-not." (28A24). The reason may well be that as Fire seems to play the active part in the mixture of the two, while Night is passive, Aristotle may have felt that Fire was Actuality, while Night was Potentiality, and then transposed these terms into What-is and What-is-not. On this point, Aristotle has had many followers in modern times, Gigon being one of the most faithful,[1] but his theory is, I think, disproved immediately by the statement ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρῳ μέτα μηδέν (28B9, 4), the most natural translation of which is that given by Raven,[2] "since neither has a share of nothingness."

Aristotle may have been misled by Parmenides' discussion of how it is possible to think in the temporal world. We are told that man's thought (νόος) depends on "the mixture of his much-wandering limbs" (or perhaps we should translate it 'organs') and that "thought is that of which

[1] *op. cit.* pp. 271 ff.

[2] *op. cit.* p. 282.

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there is more" (28B16). Theophrastus, who quotes this fragment (28A46), makes it clear that it is a preponderance of Light or Night which causes thought in Man, and he says that better and purer thought comes on account of the Hot. It is not merely that a preponderance of light in a man makes him able to perceive light; in other words it is not simply a theory of sense-perception similar to that propounded later by Empedocles. Apparently Light produces mental illumination as well, for Theophrastus tells us that Parmenides looked on thought and perception as the same thing. Theophrastus also tells us that a preponderance of Light brings memory, and an excess of Night forgetfulness. Vlastos has argued [1] that if Light predominated over Night on a ratio of 1 : 0, a man would have knowledge of What-is. If this were the case, it would of course be evidence in favour of taking Fire as being somehow or other the equivalent of What-is, but I think that it can be disproved from the Prologue. There the entry into the realm of Day or Light symbolises that Parmenides has achieved a complete state of mental illumination. But he does not yet have knowledge. That only comes when the goddess bestows it upon him, but we may note that she credits him with the possession of λόγος or Reason which will enable him to judge the proof which she will give (28B7,5). Parmenides' mind has therefore been prepared in the sensible world to be able to receive the Truth. It is interesting to note that this state of mind may have been taken by Parmenides to be the result of divine favour. That at least is how Wolf [2] interprets the lines (28B1,26-28):

ἐπεὶ οὔτι σε Μοῖρα κακὴ προὔπεμπε νέεσθαι
τήνδ' ὁδόν (ἦ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν),
ἀλλὰ Θέμις τε Δίκη τε.

"It is no evil Moira, but Right and Justice that sent you forth to travel on this way. Far indeed does it lie from the beaten track of men." In any case, it is the goddess who bestows knowledge on Parmenides, and so in the sphere of epistemology too the gap between the two worlds is bridged by divine agency.

It is not perhaps necessary to say much about the details of the cosmology offered in the last part of the poem. The main elements in it probably owe much to Hesiod and Anaximander. We may notice that, although the στεφάναι in it resemble the 'rings' of Anaximander, the word may have been chosen to recall Homer's reference (*Il.* XVIII, 485) to the stars τά τ' οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται "with which the heaven is

[1] G.Vlastos, Parmenides' Theory of Knowledge, *T.A.P.A.* LXXVII (1946), pp. 66-77, p. 72.
[2] E. Wolf, Dike bei Anaximander und Parmenides, *Lexis* II, 1 (1949), pp. 16-24.

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crowned." It was probably a rather conservative picture, but at the same time antiquity did credit him with some innovations, such as the recognition of the identity of the Morning and Evening Stars. Enough remains to show that, for all its unoriginal features, the system was Parmenides' own.

One final objection remains to be met. If the poem was integrated along the lines I have suggested, how does it happen that the Eleatic school seems to have concentrated exclusively on the Way of Truth, and to have had no regard for the sensible world? I do not think that there is a tidy answer to this, but one can easily understand why the epoch-making Way of Truth would monopolise attention, and it is highly probable that Parmenides, as a teacher, concentrated on it. Absolute Truth, after all, could never be found in the temporal world, and the philosopher must try to transcend the limits of the world in which he lives.

On the other hand the interpretation which I have offered might help to explain why Theophrastus called Empedocles a ζηλωτὴς καὶ μιμητής of Parmenides.[1] Empedocles not only follows Parmenides in writing in verse, but quite often echoes his language. His theories of sense-perception are similar, and his Sphere is surely modelled on that of Parmenides. But much more important is the fact that Empedocles denies Not-being and endows his four 'elements' with as many as possible of the attributes of the Parmenidean What-is, and frequently stresses their eternal nature. He is virtually accepting Parmenides' conception of truth and trying to establish it in the world of physics from which Parmenides had excluded it. He also tries to account for the divine powers whose existence Parmenides seems merely to have assumed. It is quite possible that Empedocles was influenced by the poem as a whole and was endeavouring to remove the difficulties which he felt were inherent in the philosophy it propounded.

If I may try to sum up, I think that there is evidence to show that the Way of Truth and the Beliefs of Mortals discuss the same world as viewed from the point of view of Eternity on the one hand, and of Time on the other. Truth can only relate to what *is* eternally, and only it can be known. The fundamental mistake made by men is that they assume that they can have *knowledge* about the world in which they live. They must be content with something less than knowledge in connexion with all that falls short of eternal Being. Nevertheless their world is not a world of illusion, but is governed by the same divine forces as control the world of What-is.

University of Nottingham.

[1] DK. 28A9.

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